

WASHINGTON, DC - Congressman Todd Akin (R-MO), a member of the House Science Committee, introduced a bill designed to address concerns regarding the bodies of executed Chinese prisoners that may be used in some displays of plastinated human remains. HR 5524 amends the Tariff Act of 1930 to prohibit the importation into the United States of plastinated human remains from the People's Republic of China. Akin filed a similar bill in 2008, when various reports had indicated likelihood that some displays may have included bodies that were executed prisoners from China.

The re-filing of a bill banning the import of plastinated remains was inspired by the proposed exhibition of plastinated remains in Congressman Akin's district by Premier Exhibitions, Inc. at a retail mall this October. In a letter to the owners of the St. Louis Galleria, which is scheduled to host the exhibit, Akin outlines ethical and human rights concerns regarding the source of the bodies used by Premier Exhibitions. The letter notes that the Saint Louis Science Center (SLSC), the prominent science museum in the region, had declined to display the exhibit due to its inability to verify consent by the deceased. The letter states, "It is our understanding that the Saint Louis Science Center declined to host this exhibition due to ethical concerns. I consider this to be very significant given that the SLSC does not object to the display of plastinated human remains in principle if there can be a verifiable guarantee of informed consent of the deceased. Not only does this decision not to host the display speak well of the ethical standards of SLSC, it is very troubling that such an informed decision by an established science museum is not being echoed by your retail establishment."

The seriousness of the potential violation of human rights is underscored by a disclaimer from a 2008 Premier Exhibition in New York City that read, "This exhibit displays full body cadavers as well as human body parts, organs, fetuses and embryos that come from cadavers of Chinese citizens or residents. With respect to the human parts, organs, fetuses and embryos you are viewing, Premier relies solely on the representation of its Chinese partners and cannot independently verify that they do not belong to persons executed while incarcerated in Chinese prisons."

“I do not believe that as a nation we should tolerate even a chance that we are allowing the public display of executed prisoners for the edification or amusement of shoppers,” stated Akin. “Such a display is an affront to our national conscience and makes a mockery of all we profess to hold dear.”